

# Senate OKs change in pesticide law

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate approved and sent President Reagan on Wednesday the first major revision of the nation's pesticide control law in a decade, calling for speeded up safety reviews of some 600 farm chemicals.

Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., told a news conference after Senate approval on a voice vote that the measure "gives us a solid start on the long walk toward pesticide reform."

He and Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., a co-sponsor, acknowledged the measure was silent on key provisions urged by a broad spectrum of environmentalists. But the two lawmakers called the bill the best that could be achieved with only weeks remaining before lawmakers go home for the year.

The legislation is a response to years of warnings from environmental groups. It would set a nine-year deadline for safety reviews that otherwise would not be completed until the year 2024, according to an estimate by the General Accounting Office.

Pesticide manufacturers would assume most of the financial burden of the testing process through fees designed to raise \$160 million.

Under the three-year reauthorization of the 1947 Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), the chemical companies that manufacture pesticides also would pay for storage and disposal of the chemicals. The obligation currently is that of the federal government.

So-called indemnity payments that have cost the EPA \$20 million to buy up stocks of banned pesticides also would be phased out under the bill, at least as they apply to manufacturers.

So-called end users, however, still would receive indemnity payments under the measure as would chemical companies that already are slated to receive them as a result of action already taken by the EPA.

Concern over the pesticide issue stems from research findings that some pesticides cause cancer, birth defects and other severe health problems. The chemicals are an outgrowth of World War II chemical warfare research and are widely used throughout U.S. agriculture.

Traces of pesticides are found in many foods on the American dinner

table. Missing from the legislation was any provision dealing with the growing problem of pesticide contamination of ground water.

The Capitol Hill-based U.S. Public Interest Research Group said in a report two weeks ago that 73 pesticides were found in ground water in 34 states, according to an inspection of EPA records. The agency said that some of the findings may have been false alarms but that the basic range was correct.

Groundwater provides the basic drinking supply for an estimated 113 million Americans, and environmental groups have been pushing for a provision to safeguard groundwater.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee considered such bill earlier this year but it was not contained in the version approved by the House last week.

In its action, the Senate merely approved the House-passed bill and sent it on to the president's desk. Because of the absence of a groundwater provision, environmentalists were only lukewarm toward the legislation.

"As passed, the bill does not even qualify for a bronze medal," said Rick Hind of the U.S. Public Interest Research Group. "On a scale of one to ten it deserves a three and is appropriately dubbed FIFRA Lite."

"This gives Congress another excuse to postpone important issues like groundwater, farm worker safety and food safety," he added.

Chairman E. "Kika" de la Garza, D-Texas, told lawmakers that the measure represented the best compromise obtainable as a divided Congress pushed toward adjournment in perhaps three weeks.

Five leading members of the Senate Agriculture Committee circulated a letter to lawmakers this week urging them to vote for the measure because it represented the only realistic way to get "simple but significant" action on the pesticide issue in this Congress.

Environmentalists have been pushing for changes in FIFRA since 1962 when naturalist Rachel Carson sparked interest in the issue with her bestselling "Silent Spring." Congress has acted several times since then but little has been accomplished in the realm of reviewing pesticide safety and only three such chemicals have been fully banned.

# The Father Of Waters

Having Greenpeace and its research ship Beluga tied up near the Arch is a matter of vital interest to St. Louisans. These energetic visitors articulate concerns that we need to adopt — concerns about our river. St. Louis' industry in conjunction with the detritus 2 million people can discharge have caused the Father of Waters to become shockingly befouled and dangerously polluted. Bluntly put, the mighty Mississippi has become a sewer.

Greenpeace is giving us information we can and need to use. We must appeal to industry and to the Metropolitan Sewer District for actions and programs to reverse the flow of filth and chemical pollution that is poisoning our great river. Getting industry and bureaucratic agencies to act will

take the massive involvement of citizens bringing pressure onto those responsible for continuing the dumping of wastes. Witness the remarks offered by Monsanto spokesman Glynn A. Young in a Sept. 21 article; he suggested that the focus was on "stunts and on Greenpeace and not on solutions to environmental problems."

I hasten to call attention to the basic appeal Greenpeace offers, to get industry and agencies like MSD simply to obey the law and conform to federal clean water standards. Ironically, spokesman Young went on to say that Monsanto planned "some kind of program" in the future to reduce its toxic effluents, which is exactly what St. Louisans and Greenpeace are asking for. And I suggest further that Monsanto be a little more specific than just referring to "in the future." Why not set dates like, say, stop pumping toxic wastes by the end of 1988? If Monsanto were challenged with developing and marketing a profitable new fertilizer, I'll bet it would meet deadlines.

As one St. Louisan, my message to Greenpeace is, "Thanks. We needed that."

Edgar Roberts  
Shrewsbury

I was shocked at the statement made in a Sept. 21 article by a spokesman from Monsanto about discharges into the Mississippi River. What I understood Monsanto to say is that since others were dumping into an overloaded treatment plant, it is not Monsanto's fault that chemicals are going into the river and that it has every right to dump its wastes in the river and the public be damned. Calling Greenpeace a stunt was uncalled for; it is about time someone spoke up. I realize that Monsanto is a large, respected pillar of industry, but does that give Monsanto a right to hide behind this image and say, "I'm not responsible?"

Charles C. Guillory  
Edwardsville